

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND
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Expansion of Sheriff's Homeless Outreach Services Teams

Since the establishment of law enforcement Homeless Outreach Services Teams (HOST) led by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff), HOST have played a critical, effective, and growing role in Los Angeles County's homeless services delivery system. HOST is often the only appropriate outreach team who can help connect unsheltered individuals to services. Experiencing homelessness is not a crime, and the HOST have an outreach-first, problem-solving approach that other local law enforcement agencies have also adopted. All HOST members undergo a special First Responder Homeless Training to ensure that they engage individuals experiencing homelessness in a humane and respectful manner, treating everyone with dignity and respect. HOST members also learn to build trust and rapport that could eventually lead to someone accepting services, shelter, and even housing. Homeless service providers acknowledge that it takes time to build trust with individuals who have been unsheltered for longer periods of time, and it is sometimes challenging for these individuals to accept services. HOST have had success engaging with service-resistant individuals and referring them to services.

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The HOST are in the field 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and respond to emergencies and calls for service when or where it is not possible for a non-law enforcement outreach team or homeless service provider to respond. For example, in the riverbeds of the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Rivers, where there are hundreds of people in encampments, only the HOST are properly equipped to answer calls for service and able to traverse sometimes dangerous terrain to reach individuals in need of emergency assistance or other services. It is usually HOST that has the capability, resources, or training to access those areas where there may be a safety hazard making it unsuitable for other homeless service providers. Additionally, the HOST also provide an important service during the annual Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, reaching remote areas to ensure a more accurate count of individuals who are more hidden and harder to count.

The HOST's unique combination of skills have made them a great partner in a number of other situations. In its continued efforts to address homelessness, the Board of Supervisors (Board) has taken considerable action to activate, construct, or otherwise facilitate the establishment of interim and emergency housing facilities throughout Los Angeles County. Many of these facilities are low-barrier housing interventions in which a resident who is homeless or at risk of homelessness may live temporarily while waiting to move into permanent housing. Although experienced homeless service providers are contracted to conduct operations at these facilities, there is often a need for an appropriate agency to ensure a safe environment for the residents of the facility as well as residents of the surrounding community. Again, HOST are the preferred organization with the appropriate skills and de-escalation training to step into this role because they have a better understanding of the service population and of the concerns and issues that

may arise in such an environment.

The HOST have become an important component of the County's homeless services delivery system. Public safety remains a concern among community residents, and they often call law enforcement first when there is an issue involving an individual experiencing homelessness in parks, public spaces, or near homes or businesses. HOST has helped address local residents' public safety concerns in a culturally sensitive manner that does not criminalize individuals experiencing homelessness. It is critical that when law enforcement responds to residents' calls for service, that deputies and officers with the appropriate training be deployed to engage vulnerable individuals effectively rather than leading with a mindset to arrest. The HOST have been able to communicate with individuals experiencing homelessness in a way that reduces involvement with the criminal justice system and instead prioritizes a connection to services and systems of care individuals need. If the Sheriff's Department or other law enforcement agency is to be the first on the scene of any incident involving an individual experiencing homelessness, it is best if a trained member of HOST carry out that first interaction and engage with a humane services-first approach.

On June 13, 2017, the Board approved a total of \$6.6 million in available, unallocated Assembly Bill 109 funding to establish law enforcement HOST and fund them through FY 2019-20. The Sheriff's HOST were provided \$1.2 million annually for three years, and the Board approved \$1 million annually for three years to help fund the Los Angeles County Police Chief's Association's (LACPCA) HOST, composed of non-Sheriff, non-Los Angeles Police Department law enforcement agencies. With support from the County and Sheriff's HOST, the LACPCA has established HOST among its members. Thirty local law enforcement agencies have participated in HOST's First Responder

Special Training and received HOST funding to lead their own law enforcement-led homeless outreach in their respective cities. The County continues to collaborate with all 88 cities to craft and implement regional solutions to homelessness. By supporting local law enforcement agencies' efforts to engage and support the homeless population, the County has also strengthened its partnership with the cities to address homelessness.

HOST is currently over-extended, and it has become challenging to meet the increasing demands for outreach and calls for service countywide. As the Board continues to take action to tackle the homelessness crisis, the Board must also ensure that HOST, as well as each component of the County's homeless services delivery system, is adequately staffed and funded.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to report back during the 2020-21 Final Changes Budget phase regarding the availability of funding to expand the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Homeless Outreach Services Teams (HOST) and add dedicated, full-time HOST personnel.
2. Direct CEO Homeless Initiative, in consultation with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles County Police Chief's Association, and Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, to review the current HOST training and report back to the Board within 90 days with recommendations to enhance HOST training, including the ability to track outcomes such as connecting an individual successfully to homeless services and housing.
3. Direct CEO Homeless Initiative to review LACPCA's contract agreement for HOST and, in consultation with LACPCA, report back to the Board within 90 days with recommended amendments that could be made to the agreement to

increase flexibility in ways the HOST funds could be utilized, in accordance with Los Angeles County's Homeless Initiative Strategies.

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